



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

however, sufficient evidence for the conclusions reached? This at least is the doubt which recurs to some of us who welcome many of these conclusions. In the case of other systems the foundations are certainly too weak to support the constructions which are reared upon them. Therefore systems of this type also represent imperfect progress. For they are unstable, and, being unstable, they fail to realize their legitimate aims. In sum the noetic cruces suggested by evolution can not reasonably be ignored. Neither, on the other hand, are they solvable at a stroke.

A. C. ARMSTRONG.

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY.

---

### THE FEELING OF OUGHTNESS: ITS PSYCHOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

THIS JOURNAL having been kind enough to review<sup>1</sup> with some sympathy a paper of mine, which, as Professor Leuba phrased it, was intended to "clear much of the ground surrounding one of the fundamental problems of the psychology of ethics," I venture to submit to American men of science the conclusions of a larger inquiry which is to appear this year in Binet's *Année psychologique*.

The problem is that of the psychological conditions of this specific and well-known state of mind which a subject expresses when he says: "I am conscious that I ought." In a paper<sup>2</sup> of 1897, Professor Leuba has called it "the feeling of oughtness." I shall use the term, although it seems to me that the latest researches on the psychology of *feelings* tend to confine this word to affective states, where the consciousness is necessarily either agreeable or painful. Writing in French, I have used the expression *la conscience de devoir* or *l'obligation de conscience*.

The feeling of oughtness is not always connected with the impression of moral goodness. I have found it very often in introspections gathered during experiments on judgment and ideation, and was thus put on the way of an experimental study of this feeling such as, if I am not mistaken, has never been conducted before.

The first results concerning this feeling of oughtness in the laboratory experiments are the following:

1. It is the apperception of an internal conflict between two tend-

<sup>1</sup> Vol. VIII., page 361.

<sup>2</sup> "The Psychophysiology of the Moral Imperative," *Amer. Journal of Psychology*, Vol. VIII., No. 4.

encies, one of which has its origin in some definite *orders* (French *consigne*; German *Aufgabe*) given to the subject as to a sentry.

2. These orders give birth only to a tendency if they be *accepted* by the subject. This acceptance implies, as its condition, a peculiar relation between the subject and the inquirer. From the standpoint of the subject this relation may be roughly described as an affective state—a combination of love and fear and admiration which gives to the experimenter prestige and authority in the eyes of the subject.

These being the results of a first investigation, the question arises: What are the tendencies of every-day life which can be assimilated to the tendency originating from *orders*? What are the tendencies which, if they meet with opposition, shall give rise to the feeling of oughtness? Habit, social custom and example, instinct have been asserted by several schools to be the fountain of moral obligation. I think it can be shown that none of them is, if considered alone, the source of any obligation whatever. Habit (of church going, *e. g.*) enforces the feeling of oughtness; it does not create it. Social custom has certainly in every one of us a binding force; but it does not act in this way through habits nor through the ideo-motor power of example. It is felt as an obligation, because there are, at its origin, positive *orders* given by respected authorities to affectively disposed subjects: in other terms, because the circumstances are exactly the same as in the laboratory experiments alluded to.

If, in speaking of instincts, we first think of animal life, is it not curious that the symptoms, which might be interpreted as proving the presence of a feeling of oughtness in animals, are to be found in dogs to whom *orders* are given in general terms? Ought we perhaps to consider our domestic animals as Aristotle considered the slave: if they be not apt to form general judgments, they might be, nevertheless, capable of receiving them?

The *orders* given in general terms to the psychological subject as to the soldier have not only the same characteristics as the ancestral *taboo* to which the sociological school gives such a great place in the explanation of moral ideas; they also answer exactly to the description which Kant gives of the moral law: categorical, imperative, but requiring some experience, if one is to see where they have to be applied in practical life. This resemblance is easy to account for. The *orders* are indeed a product of reason, if we think that reason has a part in every universal proposition, be it indicative or imperative. But we have no ground for invoking here a *pure* reason dictating a law to all intelligent beings, whether human or not. Kant says himself that his theory does not in the least account for

the practical effect of this purely rational law; the fact of obligation remains to him entirely unintelligible.<sup>3</sup>

If we say that the origin of obligation is to be found in an universal proposition formulated by a concrete person and accepted by another person, we shall understand the binding character of some *orders*, which to our intellectual judgment appear absurd. The obligatory character of the law of sacrifice, as it is felt by many Christians, is inconsistent with the rationalistic theory as well as with the sociological one: this law, taken universally, is anti-rational as well as anti-social. With our theory, if we have received the law from somebody whom we love and admire, this is sufficient to explain the hold it has on us.

Two questions are forced on our attention and require further examination: (1) How does the reason work in order to transform the "impression of good," given by a particular action, into a general judgment of value? (2) How is the affective relation, necessary to the acceptance of orders, originated? To this last problem so much may here be said: there is no ground to believe that prestige is always of social origin. Psycho-analysis shows a way in which biological and sociological values might be created apart from any social influence.

These few propositions may perhaps be of some interest even without the body of facts which in a longer article could be called upon to back them up. They are, as can be seen, purely psychological. Their ethical, pedagogical, and philosophical corollaries do not concern us here. When the causal relations, which we have set forth, shall be generally recognized, the various philosophies will have to reckon with them, and they will do so without difficulty. Some will welcome the contingent character of our moral obligations; others will be impressed with the great place our theory gives to the personality: to them the mystery of personality will soon seem as sacred and as adorable as did the mystery of the moral law.

PIERRE BOVET.

UNIVERSITY OF NEUCHÂTEL.

---

## DISCUSSION

### PROFESSOR DEWEY'S "BRIEF STUDIES IN REALISM"

IN the interesting "Studies in Realism," which Mr. Dewey has recently published,<sup>1</sup> he has done two things. In addition to presenting more fully than he had done before his own view of the

<sup>3</sup>"Grundlegung," 3d section, *sub fine*.

<sup>1</sup>This JOURNAL, Vol. VIII., pages 393 ff. and pages 546 ff.